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THE scattered offensive movement, which the Germans have been pursuing along the Western front with so much vigour and persistence for the past week or two, has culminated this week in a serious attack to the north and east of Verdun. At the time of writing, all that the available information enables us to conclude is that it is an important affair, possibly almost comparable in scale with the French offensive in Champagne in September. From the French *communiqués* we learn that the attack covers a front of some 25 miles. From the German we get the claim that 3,000 prisoners were captured in the first rush, and that the line was penetrated to a maximum depth of 1½ miles along a six-mile front. Later German statements announce a substantial further advance on the same front. The French in Champagne, it will be remembered, penetrated to a depth of three miles along a front of 20 miles, and captured 20,000 prisoners. On the more important question, however, of how far the Germans may be able to follow up their attack, there are as yet no materials available for comparison. French military opinion is apparently at the moment still inclined to regard this movement as differing not in kind, but only in degree, from the attacks which have immediately preceded it on other parts of the front. It is held that the Germans are anxious to be able to announce some success on the Western front as an offset to the Turkish disaster, but that they cannot hope to effect any serious breach in the French system of defences here or elsewhere. At this stage we are confined to recording this view without comment.

To say that the fundamental factor in this "war of attrition" is the factor of numbers is a commonplace which everybody professes to accept, but the bearing of which upon the problem of the Western front and upon the general prospects of the war is by no means universally realised. If it were, a great deal more public attention would have been concentrated upon the question of the German losses; and the quite absurd under-estimates which have been put forward—for reasons other than a desire to arrive at the truth—would have been laughed out of court, or more probably would never have seen the light. Only three weeks ago we had the *Times* Military Correspondent, a gentleman with something of a European reputation to preserve, solemnly, though not very whole-heartedly perhaps, professing to accept the German official figures—and this although only a month earlier he had put forward an estimate of his own which placed the enemy's losses at a figure which was higher by almost a million. We need not enquire into the causes of this remarkable resurrection of dead and disabled Germans. But the irresponsible fashion in which these vitally significant figures are thus dealt with by persons upon whose judgment the public has been accustomed to rely adds a great deal to the importance and interest of the analysis which Mr. Belloc is able to give in the current issue of *Land and Water*, on the authority of, as he says, "the best source of information in Europe"—the French Higher Command.

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We cannot reproduce here the evidence by which Mr. Belloc undertakes to show that the number of the German killed up to the end of 1915, instead of being only 651,000 (as officially stated), must, at any rate, be over a million. But it is quite convincing to anyone

## Miscellany

### GERMAN POETS AND THE WAR

ONE of the most interesting and impartial of "neutral observers," ex-Senator Beveridge, not long ago assured the world that a great literary revival was taking place in Germany. When all the facts were known, he said, there would be general amazement at the greatness of the transformation brought about by the war. But many of the facts have come to light and, so far as one can see, they indicate nothing of an unexpected nature—nothing which might not have been prophesied by anyone with a fairly intimate knowledge of Germany and the Germans. Thus it was certain that there would be an enormously increased output of published poems; the Germans are a poetic race, and even in times of peace solemn academic journals devote a good deal of attention to scores of volumes of verse fit only to grace drawing-room tables. There is probably no country where more encouragement is given to the mediocre poet. So when we read, as a German critic lately asserted, that in the first month of the war 50,000 poems per day were written (though not all published) throughout the Empire, and in the first year over 6,000,000, we may stand aghast for a moment, but we are certainly not surprised.

It might also have been foreseen that the Germans would intensify their always abnormal race-consciousness to an extraordinary degree. This was the case in 1813, as it was in 1870; in the crisis of 1914 the same process was repeated. The average German is generally a most broad-minded cosmopolitan in his literary and artistic tastes; but at certain times this generous characteristic is liable, in the great bulk of the people, to give way to an exclusive chauvinism. And this has happened in Germany of to-day. Richard Dehmel, poet and humanitarian, has assumed a somewhat incongruous patriotism; so has Gerhart Hauptmann, who was still more distinctively a social prophet. Rebel poets and dramatists, such as Wedekind and Ludwig Thoma, whose biting satire was so frequently directed against convention and authority, have suddenly become docile, sentimental lovers of the Fatherland; and certain Social Democratic artists, headed by the Whitmanian poet, novelist and playwright Arno Holz, have shown themselves capable of the wildest Jingoism. But the event which has caused the greatest satisfaction to all true German patriots is the apparent collapse—with a few important exceptions—of the whole Symbolist and Neo-Romantic movement. In the eyes of the ordinary German Imperialist there was always something essentially "undeutsch" in these schools of poetry; hence the delight which has been manifested at the so-called "conversion" of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Ernst Hardt, Franz Werfel, Richard Schaukal, and a dozen others not so well known. Frequently this much-acclaimed "Bekehrung" is nothing more than a general resolve to take life more seriously, implying no change in literary or imaginative ideals. A poet of the Hofmannsthal circle, for example, Rudolf Schröder, wrote some time ago in a private letter from the front:

My dear friend, let us solemnly promise, that the new time, if we live to see it, shall find us better men and truer, more brotherly, purer.

The chauvinist reviews—among which even periodicals

like the *Neue Bundschau* are now to be reckoned—find it convenient to see in such declarations a sign that the Romantics are returning to the "deutsche Art." The one important poet who has given them absolutely no reason for such a conclusion, is Stefan George—and he is at present the most unpopular poet in Germany.

The poet who is most widely acclaimed to-day is undoubtedly Richard Dehmel. One can scarcely take up any periodical of the ordinary type without finding either a patriotic poem from his pen or some eulogistic reference to him. In the early days of the war, amidst vociferous applause, Dehmel volunteered to serve in the Landsturm—his age is fifty-one. But although the critics said that this marked the opening of a new creative period, none of the poems he sent back from the front, or of those he wrote before his departure, seems of any particular merit. Here we find echoes of Arndt and the usual commonplaces—"death's hour," "heroic mind," "Not" rhyming with "Tod" and "Held" with "Feld." Possibly it is to this assumption of Arndt's mantle that a great deal of his popularity is due. Arndt, the poet of the glorious days of 1813, still wields an immense influence in Germany. In the eyes of a public inclined to overlook commonplace and a certain prosiness so long as the verse has a good rhythm, and is impeccable in its patriotism, this following of the "echt deutsch" tradition, together with an undoubted lyrical gift, may easily make Dehmel the foremost war-poet of Germany. The best poem of his collection is the "Song to all" (*Lied an alle*):

One fiery will in its clearness hovers  
Over the powder and dust and smoke;  
Not for life, oh, not for life,  
Are men fighting the battle of life;  
Death always comes—  
Death divine!

Ernst Lissauer, who, on the whole, stands next to Dehmel in popularity, is a far less talented poet. A year or two ago he published a volume of war-poems entitled "1813," and in consequence he is now being hailed as a prophet. But he never enjoyed a really wide reputation until, one day early in the war, he woke up, like Byron, to find himself famous and his *Hymn of Hate against England* on every German lip. Recently he seems to have spoken with modesty concerning his achievement, as if in deference to the many protests from neutrals and milder-mannered Germans; but the fact cannot be concealed that for a few months the *Hassgesang gegen England* was heard all over Germany, and that, moreover, several reputable critics praised it as the zenith—the "Höhepunkt"—of his poetical achievement. They were right. Whatever we may think of the moral sentiments which inspired him, we cannot deny praise to Lissauer for having written a really original patriotic poem, refreshingly free from the outworn Arndt and Geibel tradition. Apart from this masterpiece, Lissauer has done little. He has written an ode to "Germany's outpost," poor, neglected Heligoland, another verse-attack on the arch-enemy, called *England Dreams* (*England träumt*), and a poem entitled "Leaders" (*Führer*), which invokes Luther, Bach, Kant, Schiller, Beethoven, Goethe, and Bismarck. But all these other poems by Lissauer are weak and lifeless in comparison with the *Hymn of Hate*.

Many of the best German war-poems have been written by men in the fighting line. Their work often seems deeper and more serious, even more artistically sincere, than the so-called "Schreibtischlyrik"—we might say "armchair poetry"—of Dehmel and the rest. The point of view of most of them is well put by the volunteer poet Bruno Frank, in one of his "War-Strophes" (*Strophen im Krieg*):

We have hated war ;  
To us it was the nightmare of the world ;  
Alone we bear the load now,  
That eternal peace may come.

In the first few months the war was celebrated by the poets—especially those excused from service—with plenty of gusto and facile patriotism. But such an opinion as I have just quoted was later put forward by very many young poets, all of whom, whether in the army or not, stood in various degrees of aloofness from the general patriotic madness. Among these young artists who preferred emphasising the realities of war to boasting their "Vaterlandsliebe" two are particularly prominent—Walther Heymann and Wilhelm Klemm. The first was a volunteer; he was killed on January 9th in a night attack at Soissons. A marked sobering effect was produced by the publication of his poems and letters from the front, which are worth attention less for their literary merit than for the insight they give into the mind of this typical young intellectual in his attitude to the war. Wilhelm Klemm is a doctor on the Russian front. His poems, considered purely as literature, are superior to Heymann's; they have been compared with Whitman's "Drum-taps," and the comparison is scarcely over-praise.

Klemm's poems appeared in the vigorous periodical *Die Aktion*, which has been doing much, together with Wilhelm Herzog's *Forum* and René Schickel's *Die Weissen Blätter*, to protest against the almost universal outcry against French culture. Herzog, who generally combines the functions of editor and sole contributor, is certainly no pacifist; he seems to consider Heinrich von Kleist as the highest type of German. But he sees the danger, to which Germany is now particularly exposed, of being cut off from all European culture, and his many articles on this subject should have an excellent effect. *Die Aktion* goes much farther—one of the most significant things it has done has been to publish a special number in memory of the French poet Charles Péguy. René Schickel is one of a group of German Alsatian poets all of whom are in close touch with modern French literary movements. His friend and co-worker, Ernst Stadler, who lived in Brussels, and did more than anyone to bring home to Germans the value of contemporary French culture, was unfortunately killed on the Western front. But Schickel himself is still at home, editing *Die Weissen Blätter*, publishing his own Maeterlinckian poems, together with translations from modern French poets, ridiculing the noisy so-called "intellectuals" and beginning, in his own words, "the work of reconstruction, of helping to prepare for a victory of the spirit."

Stefan George, almost alone among the older poets of established reputation, is carrying out the same thankless task with his well-known *Blätter für die Kunst*. Last January he, together with Karl Wolfskehl, brought out an edition of this periodical containing one hundred and fifty pages of their poems, but no reference to the war, except in a note at the end which stated their reasons for disregarding the war, and characterised the bulk of the war-poems as "sing-song." The chief value of the volume to students of literature is that in it George may be seen reaching out after a neo-Hellenism, touched by modern influences; one of his poems, *Hyperion*, may be compared with Hölderlin on the one hand and Henri de Régnier on the other. But apart from this, there is the fact that George represents a body of German poets and artists, larger perhaps than we have been allowed to know, who are in some way a guarantee that not all the ties of culture will be broken, and that, in the realms of the imagination and the intellect, there need be no war, at least no war of "blood and iron."

ALEC W. G. RANDALL.

## Music

### THE MUSICAL CONSTITUTION OF ENGLAND

THE question as to whether the English are a musical nation is one so hackneyed that it arises at almost any tea party to which some unfortunate musician has been bidden: and, like many questions haphazardly dropped into the stream of everyday conversation, the questioner is curiously hazy as to the meaning of what he asks, and the answerer probably equally hazy as to the meaning of what he replies. Indeed, hardly anyone who discusses this matter seems to have a clear conception of what really constitutes the musicality of a nation, and truly the more one thinks about it the less does one feel competent to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. Nor is the object of this article to answer that question in the manner a musician might be supposed to answer it, for I, too, must plead guilty to incompetence, the subject being somewhat outside the faculty of musicianship on the one hand, and there being no criterion on the other when all has been said. But what I would attempt to do (and in that attempt some light may be thrown on the subject) is to draw attention to the strange musical constitution of England, a constitution which is as perverse as (to my knowledge) it is unique; and unless, in certain directions at any rate, a change is brought about, the aspirations concerning British music and the part it is to play in England and elsewhere are little likely to be realised.

And, to begin with, I have no hesitation in saying that England is producing at the present time composers whose works will long outlive the death of their physical bodies; and I may mention Delius for one (born in Bradford) and Percy Grainger for another, whose value, by the way, I do not estimate from the works he has composed and published, but from the works he has composed but *not* published. The public, in fact, only knows of this most British of all composers from what Chesterton would perhaps call his "Tremendous Trifles"; the larger works being hidden away as being too difficult for performance in this country. Now, most people are aware of the large amount of "talk" concerning British music and the younger generation of composers—and yet the musical constitution of Britain is of such a nature that those very composers are compelled to go abroad for the publication and performance of the particular works which exhibit their true value as serious musicians. In other words, those who have attained to celebrity are celebrated solely for their trifles in this country, while abroad they are celebrated solely for their serious works—and this was brought home very particularly before the war when on my travels in Germany and Austria I endeavoured to gain a performance for one of Grainger's small but, to my mind, exquisite fancies; for my proposal was rejected with the words, "In this country [Austria] the work would not be regarded as serious." My own case (if I may be pardoned for mentioning it) is also illustrative of this fact, in that my songs are practically unknown abroad, whereas (at any rate before our conflict with Germany and Austria) what I regard as my serious works were performed to a very considerable extent. As to Delius, his case is only different in so far that he has composed hardly any "trifles" at all: with the result that he has been compelled to wait until something approaching his fiftieth year before receiving recognition in his own country. Nor must we omit Dr. Ethel Smyth, who is in the same situation, and whose operas gained their first hearing in Germany. Thus the unpopular fact forces itself upon us that had it not been